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ABSTRACT

This report presents an overview of the literature on school/teacher effectiveness and improvement, with a focus on implications for developing countries. Sections 1-2 discuss the trend toward site-based management, which has increased pressures on individual schools and their staff; eight key domains of school effectiveness; and the need to understand how policy requirements and decisions are linked to research evidence and knowledge utilization. Section 3 lists the types of statutory and nonstatutory policy interventions being used to improve school effectiveness and teacher effectiveness, lists characteristics of school and teacher effectiveness found in studies in developed countries, examines evidence from the "school improvement movement," and discusses the importance of capacity building. In general, the literature shows that successful improvement projects depend on understanding the local economic and cultural context, diagnosing the problem accurately, implementing appropriate strategies sensitively and efficiently, encouraging teachers to work together, creating connections within the educational system and with outside agencies, evaluating throughout the process, and keeping pupils' learning needs at the center of every initiative. Section 4 discusses the context of school effectiveness and improvement in rural Africa, looks at the limited research on school effectiveness in developing countries and the limited transferability of research from developed countries, argues in favor of using a case study approach, and outlines a conceptual framework for factors affecting school effectiveness. (Contains 59 references.) (SV)

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EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS THEMATIC GROUP

Effective Schooling in Rural Africa
Report 2

KEY ISSUES CONCERNING SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPROVEMENT

May 2000

Prepared by Lesley Saunders, Head of School Improvement Research Centre, National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, for the World Bank project *Effective Schooling in Rural Africa*. This paper is based on material in the process of being developed for the *Effective Schools and Teachers* website.

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1. WHAT ARE 'EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS'? WHY DO THEY MATTER?

> *'Gone are the days when local officials could attribute mass ignorance and illiteracy to poverty in their areas, and when school administrators could wait for the government to take care of the financial aspects of their operations.'* (Lo, 1999)

> *'The changes in [people's perceptions of what makes] an acceptable school environment in the face of extreme resource constraints in the poorest countries have posed starkly the question: What are the essential basic conditions for a school to be effective? Each country faces the challenge of defining for itself those essential conditions that it can reasonably expect to create and sustain in its schools to make them effective.'* (Heneveld, 2000)

Education policy-makers these days are seeking to:

- devolve decision-making to site-level on operational, and sometimes financial, matters;
- centralize decision-making on the curriculum, standards and assessment;
- implement evidence-based accountability arrangements;
- focus on outcomes more than inputs;
- increase parental choice.

(Cuttance and Hill, 1999)

This trend inevitably means that there is a sharper focus, and a more intense pressure, on the capacity of individual schools and teachers – as distinct from the system as a whole – to deliver 'educational goods' for their children. Each society has its own – and probably more than one – interpretation of 'educational goods', so that a good school in rural Africa may *look* very different from a good school in Uzbekhistan, for example (see Acedo, 2000). Moreover, who makes the decisions about how schools should develop is a key political question for stakeholders to address (see Riley, 1998).

But the basic common elements – the most desirable educational outcomes – include:

- **motivation to learn** (for which **attendance in school** is a prerequisite)
- evidence of learning: **academic achievement**
- acquisition of **vocational, personal and civic skills ('life skills')**
- progression to a **further stage of education and/or training**.

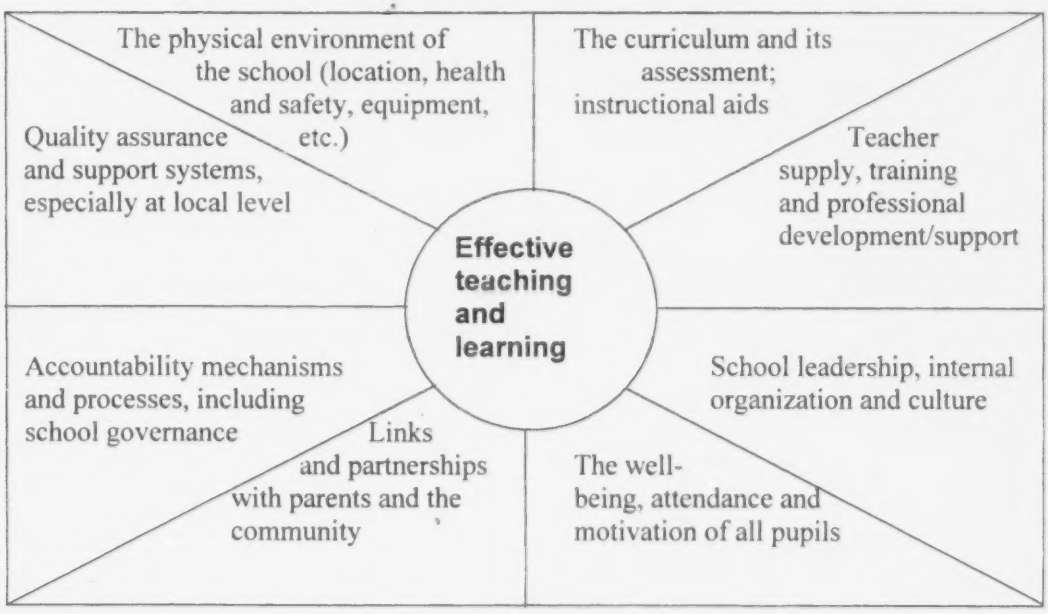
It is eminently evident – and research has confirmed – that schools are by no means identical in their capacity or 'effectiveness' in delivering these. Indeed, the variability between schools is a major issue in some countries. This has led to an increasing policy need to go beneath the surface of average and aggregate data, in order to assess and improve the effectiveness of individual schools, and the teaching and learning that goes on in them.

2. WHAT IS INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING 'EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING'?

Education For All has encouraged actions to bring children to school who had previously been excluded – girls, nomadic people, the poor – but even full attendance at school is not a guarantee of access to learning. A range of factors combine to limit the impact of schools and other education programs. These include: lack of connection between schools and communities; limited access to good health and nutrition programs; poor teaching; a depleted teaching force in many countries due to AIDS; materials and approaches which do not accommodate learners' needs (e.g. different mother tongues); strategies which fail to recognize that for many children schooling is a fragmented, not a continuous, experience.

This means that there are many different parts of the system which need to be worked on to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning in schools. One way of representing these is as a map of **eight key domains** centering around the goal of effective teaching and learning:

Figure 1: Domains of school effectiveness


The physical environment of the school (location, health and safety, equipment, etc.)
The curriculum and its assessment; instructional aids
Quality assurance and support systems, especially at local level
Teacher supply, training and professional development/support
Effective teaching and learning
Accountability mechanisms and processes, including school governance
School leadership, internal organization and culture
Links and partnerships with parents and the community
The well-being, attendance and motivation of all pupils

Clearly, the role of national governments in instituting educational reforms and providing frameworks, systems, resources and regulatory mechanisms to support effective schooling is central. Equally, schools cannot be effective learning environments for *all* pupils unless

the basic material conditions for learning – health, access and equity – are realized. (These issues can be explored on other websites of the World Bank: see Appendix.)

But, at whatever level of operations, a major question is how knowledge about school/teacher effectiveness and school/teacher improvement can be most usefully constructed and managed to aid the design of policy and strategy:

> *'Whether, and in what sense, Educational Effectiveness and Educational Improvement knowledge is used in political decision making is far more dependent on the particular political, educational and societal context of a country than on the actual results from specific research and improvement projects.'* (Creemers, 1999)

Indeed, policy requirements and decisions often outstrip research evidence on the measurable impact of initiatives to improve school and teacher effectiveness. Key issues here are:

- how to understand better the process of policy formation and its links to knowledge utilization (see Porter, 1997).
- how to find ways of analysing, and giving weight to, the 'concrete messiness' of the everyday reality of schools, which may bear very little resemblance to policy guidelines or statutory instruments (see Harber, 1992; Kliebard, 1993).
- how to design and fund the rigorous and therefore costly studies – either primary studies or quantitative research syntheses – which could unambiguously demonstrate the impact of any given policy or strategy. (See Wang *et al.*, 1993; Oakley, 2000)

Even so, a huge amount of information, theoretical knowledge and practical understanding exists which could be helpful to education developers and managers, as well as school principals and teachers, in the task of improving schools and teaching. Determining how this information can be accessed and organized so as to empower such people to take more informed decisions is one of the functions of the Thematic Group in the World Bank.

3. SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPROVEMENT: WHAT DO WE KNOW?

3.1 What Kinds of Policy Interventions Are Being Used to Improve Schools' Effectiveness?

Attempts at policy level to make **schools and schooling** more effective can be either *statutory* or *non-statutory*, which can be understood as either *regulatory* or *enabling*. Such attempts include:

statutory:

- channelling resources into schools lacking basic necessities, from sound and safe buildings and sanitation to textbooks and ICT facilities
- restructuring the curriculum and making specified content compulsory
- establishing quality assurance systems, e.g. *via* frequent independent inspections
- instituting regular standardised assessments of all pupils in core subjects
- recording and reporting the results of these assessments at school level, with the purpose of monitoring progress and identifying under-performance
- setting standards or targets for pupil achievement
- either using interventions – such as appointing replacement principals – to turn round, or else eventually closing, schools which fail to meet those standards or targets
- making schools more accountable to the local community by, for example, specifying parent and community representation on school governing boards
- linking school funding to performance

non-statutory:

- promoting the notion of schools' responsibility for helping each child to reach her/his potential
- instituting specific centrally-funded programs for which schools can bid
- promoting a culture of self-evaluation and review, using information ranging from 'benchmarking' data to pupils' experiences
- encouraging 'evidence-based' education and the use of research to support practice
- encouraging schools to involve both pupils and parents more actively in the life of the school
- promoting private sector involvement in aspects of schooling such as curriculum design/delivery through, e.g., education-business partnerships

As a major part of the drive to improve schools, there has also been a greater concern than previously with improving the effectiveness of teachers and teaching. Attempts to make **teachers and teaching** more effective include:

statutory:

- establishing systems to ensure effective deployment of teachers, *via* education management information systems (EMIS) and geographic information systems (GIS)
- raising the profile and value of teaching as a profession, *via* publicity campaigns, incentives packages, the creation and development of professional associations, etc.
- requiring teachers to be qualified, i.e. trained to minimum standards (in some countries, making teaching a graduate or even post-graduate profession)
- ensuring that initial teacher training is done by accredited institutions and includes substantial school-based placement
- ensuring that all teachers have access to further professional training and development throughout their careers
- providing professional support and advisory services at a local level
- using external inspectors to assess the performance of individual teachers against national norms
- using standardized pupil outcome data to assess the quality of instruction
- establishing in-school appraisal systems
- providing paid time for team work and development
- enhancing remuneration and promotion prospects for 'leading' or 'advanced skills' teachers
- instituting performance-related pay for all teachers

non-statutory:

- basing programs of high-quality continuing professional development around the common theme of 'effectiveness and improvement'
- involving teachers in task groups and working parties on the curriculum, etc.
- involving teacher unions in the development and dissemination of good practice
- respecting teachers as agents and giving them a stronger sense of autonomy about, and responsibility for, the learning of all of their pupils
- encouraging teachers to participate in professional partnership activities, such as clustering, peer observation and/or mentoring
- promoting a culture of self-evaluation and the use of research to support practice

3.2 What Does the Research on School/Teacher Effectiveness and Improvement Show? An Overview

Policy-makers and practitioners tend to think, naturally enough, of 'school effectiveness and improvement' as a single body of knowledge. In fact, school effectiveness and school improvement have developed historically as separate disciplines based on different approaches to gathering evidence, and therefore with different knowledge bases to offer. The leading exponents in school effectiveness and school improvement are now developing theories and frameworks to enable more integrated activities. Professionals working in the field need, of course, to draw on both disciplines, as Heneveld and Craig (Heneveld, 2000; Heneveld and Craig, 1996) argue. This section draws out the main points and lessons from each discipline, and summarizes possible ways forward for policy and practice.

3.2.1 'School effectiveness' studies in developed countries

Over the twenty or so years of its growth, 'school effectiveness' research has taught us how to measure with increasing sophistication the effects, and the effectiveness, of schools. 'School effectiveness' is now very well developed as a quasi-scientific body of research – that is, one which attempts to build up a coherent knowledge base through the replication of rigorously-designed sequential studies. These are quantitative and methodologically complex; they typically require the application of statistical techniques such as multilevel modelling to large datasets acquired through longitudinal data collection. Cumulatively, they have revealed (see, for example, Sammons *et al.*, 1995; Scheerens, 1999):

- the influence of individual schools on educational outcomes; and hence the rationale for improving the effectiveness of schools rather than systems
- the influence of background – e.g., gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status – on educational outcomes; and hence the importance of addressing equity and access issues
- the relative importance of 'proximal' factors – e.g. curriculum, instruction, assessment and home environment – over 'distal' ones – e.g. school re-structuring, site management, teacher credential requirements and evaluation – in improving learning outcomes for pupils
- the existence of 'differential effectiveness' within schools (which has implications for school improvement efforts)

- the key characteristics or correlates of effective schools and effective teaching in developed countries, commonly identified as:
  - ✓ professional leadership
  - ✓ shared vision and goals
  - ✓ a learning environment
  - ✓ concentration on teaching and learning/maximized learning time
  - ✓ purposeful teaching/achievement orientation
  - ✓ high expectations
  - ✓ positive reinforcement
  - ✓ monitoring progress
  - ✓ a learning organization
  - ✓ pupils' rights and responsibilities
  - ✓ home-school partnership

Such a list by itself is not, of course, wholly explanatory: as Heneveld and Craig (1996) point out, *'that the factors interact to reinforce each other is at least as important as their presence in a school... variations in any of these variables will influence the others.'*

Furthermore, school effectiveness research has not so far demonstrated how ineffective schools can become more effective. In other words, it is not at all obvious that the correlates of ineffectiveness are simply the converse of effectiveness correlates. More research is needed on the means by which poorer schools are enabled to become better (see Reynolds, 1996; Stoll and Myers, 1998).

Additionally – as its exponents acknowledge – the discipline is for pragmatic reasons chiefly concerned with defining effectiveness in terms of cognitive and academic outcomes, rather than with social and affective ones. This and other perceived shortcomings have been discussed by, for example, Elliott, 1996; Slee *et al.*, 1998; Scheerens, 1999.

3.2.2 Research into 'teacher effectiveness'

Comparative pupil outcomes resulting from different kinds of teaching styles and practices have been less well researched than outcomes at the institutional level. Reynolds and Muijs (2000), in a recent review of the literature, identify and discuss the following factors:

- ✓ opportunity to learn
- ✓ an academic orientation
- ✓ effective classroom management
- ✓ teacher expectations
- ✓ active teaching
- ✓ instructional variety
- ✓ brisk pace
- ✓ frequent and appropriate questioning
- ✓ lesson clarity
- ✓ teacher task orientation
- ✓ engagement in the learning process – both 'time on task' and use of 'higher order thinking skills'. Behaviors to enhance pupils' engagement in learning include:
  - ➢ providing material which on average produces a moderate-to-high success rate in pupils' results
  - ➢ using pupils' ideas and experiences to help them internalize the meaning of instructional materials
  - ➢ structuring the lesson by verbal markers and/or activities of progressive cognitive difficulty

Craig *et al.* (1998) give a more general summary of elements comprising 'effective teachers', as follows:

'Effective teachers at a mature stage of development tend to:

- ✓ know their subject matter
- ✓ use pedagogy appropriate for the content
- ✓ use an appropriate language of instruction and have mastery of that language
- ✓ create and sustain an effective learning environment

- ✓ find out about and respond to the needs and interests of their students and communities
- ✓ reflect on their teaching and children's responses and make changes to the learning environment as necessary
- ✓ have a strong sense of ethics
- ✓ are committed to teaching
- ✓ care about their students.'

Craig *et al.* (1998) also review what the literature has to say about features relating to the environment and the classrooms of effective teachers, which can be summarized as follows:

- ✓ A capable teaching force
- ✓ Adequate support
- ✓ Positive teacher attitudes
- ✓ Time and efficiency
- ✓ Classroom management
- ✓ High expectations
- ✓ Student-teacher interactions
- ✓ Organized curriculum
- ✓ Clear and focused lessons
- ✓ Frequent monitoring and assessment
- ✓ Variety in teaching strategies
- ✓ Reward and incentive systems for students

Again, however, such research has not yet been able to show how ineffective teachers can be made more effective. Nor, on the theoretical front, does it appear to give enough weight to constructivist theories of learning, i.e., the argument that learning is not so much a transfer of knowledge from the teacher to the learner but rather an interactive process in which knowledge must be actively constructed by the learner (see, for example, Wertsch, 1985).

3.2.3 Types of evidence from the 'school improvement movement'

With its roots in practice rather than scientific research, the field of 'school improvement' continues to be characterized by a wide range of qualitative studies which have not, on the whole, been intended to replicate each other but rather to explicate the highly context-specific nature of 'improvement'. These studies have contributed to:

- the conceptualization of the ***management of change***, plus an understanding of the role and function of 'change agents' in education (see, e.g., Fullan, 1992, 1993)
- frameworks and models for understanding the actualities of improvement as a ***process*** at system, school and classroom levels: (see, e.g., Hopkins *et al.*, 1997b)
- insights into the different ***experiences, views and needs of the key players***: principals/headteachers, teachers, pupils, parents (see, e.g., MacBeath *et al.*, 1996; Rudduck, 1996; Rudduck *et al.*, 1996; MacGilchrist *et al.*, 1997; MacBeath, 1998)
- in-depth descriptive analyses of in-school ***cultures and power relationships*** (see, e.g., Ball, 1987; Hargreaves, 1994, 1995; MacGilchrist *et al.*, 1997; Stoll, 1998; Bishop and Mulford, 1999; Freiberg, 1999)
- ***evaluations*** of individual improvement initiatives (see, e.g., Stoll and Fink, 1992; Myers, 1995; Earl and Lee, 1998; Hopkins *et al.*, 1997a; Slavin *et al.*, 1992)
- a sharper focus on the ***classroom*** as the prime site of instruction and interaction (see, e.g., Hopkins *et al.*, 1997c)

In general, school improvement research has not addressed the issue of how to compare the effectiveness of different initiatives for enhancing pupil performance. One exception to this is Harris (2000).

3.2.4 Where next in school improvement? The importance of capacity-building

> *'Support for real improvement involves challenge and accountability but, more fundamentally, it is about helping schools understand and develop their own capacity.'* (Stoll, 1999)

Although the two traditions of school effectiveness and school improvement are now working together to produce joint programs of research and development, it is clear that there is no single 'right' recipe for improving schools and teaching:

> 'In many school systems there is despair at the signal failure of both "top-down" and "bottom-up" reforms to significantly enhance the learning of students... All the more recent studies of centralised policy initiatives confirm the established finding [that] "local implementation dominates outcomes"... Yet... a meta-analysis of school improvement strategies clearly supports the conclusion that most schools without some form of external support have no idea at all at how best to direct resources towards enhancing student achievement. So if neither "top-down" nor "bottom-up" works, what combination of "pressure and support" is required to support school improvement?... Simply it is ... about... building capacity from within. **Effective schools throughout the world have created internal contexts within which powerful learning and teaching occurs** – they are schools that have norms of continuous improvement.' (Harris and Hopkins, 2000)

Some suggestions for future directions in school and teacher improvement programs include the following (taken from Harris, 2000):

- **Using policy directives to foster school improvement**: Although policy directives like target-setting, development planning and self-evaluation are not sufficient for sustained school improvement, such approaches are probably a necessary starting point for all schools.
- **Building in 'fidelity implementation'**: The most effective school improvement programs have instructional strategies that are highly prescriptive in the mode of delivery. High-quality training ensures uniformity of technique and approach. Regular checks at the implementation stage ensure that the project principles are adhered to and teaching practices reinforced.
- **Using 'school effectiveness' research more systematically**: Research into effective subject departments, for example (see Sammons *et al.*, 1997; Harris, 1998), highlights the need to work at departmental as well as at whole-school level; this evidence is highly compatible with school improvement projects which use a multi-layered approach to impact at different levels within the institutional hierarchy. Such insights should be used to reinforce both fields of research.

- **Re-focusing on the classroom**: Many school improvement efforts have until recently neglected the primacy of instruction but – as we said earlier – school effectiveness research shows that factors at the classroom level (the 'proximal variables') account for the greater part of variation in student outcomes. Qualitative research also reveals differences in culture and ethos between different classrooms in the same school (see, e.g., MacBeath *et al.*, 1999), which we can assume have an impact on student learning. School improvement projects are therefore now focusing more directly on teaching, pedagogy and classroom management.
- **Providing differentiated improvement strategies**: Much school improvement practice assumes that all strategies are equally effective for all schools, irrespective of their current level effectiveness, type or capacity for change/growth. But if schools differ from each other in their degree of effectiveness and are also internally differentially effective (e.g. not as effective for some groups of pupils, or in some subjects, as others), then school improvement strategies surely need to be responsive to differences in school type, departmental culture, etc. (see Hopkins *et al.*, 1997b).
- **Ensuring systematic program evaluation**: Highly effective projects such as 'Success for All' (see Slavin *et al.*, 1992) and the 'Models of Teaching' approach (see Joyce *et al.*, 1997) ground their practice in consistent and systematic empirical enquiry. Future school improvement work should ensure that there is systematic evaluation to document the impact of changes on pupils' academic and social outcomes and processes.

More specifically, Stoll (1999) suggests ways of building capacity in schools. First, the five aspects which are key to building capacity *from the outside* are:

- ✓ respect professionalism
- ✓ support continuing professional development
- ✓ help schools interpret and use data
- ✓ be critical friends [i.e. provide both support and challenge]
- ✓ make high quality education for all a priority (especially in disadvantaged areas)

Second, the thirteen principles which will build capacity *from within* are:

- ✓ challenge low expectations
- ✓ put people at the center – don't neglect emotions
- ✓ establish a positive climate
- ✓ develop deep understanding of the change process
- ✓ cultivate development-friendly norms
- ✓ become learning experts: model, promote and support professional learning
- ✓ work between and beyond schools

- ✓ change structures where necessary
- ✓ broaden leadership
- ✓ give inquiry and reflection pride of place
- ✓ listen especially to students/pupils
- ✓ seek connectedness within the whole dynamic of the school
- ✓ promote collective responsibility

IN A NUTSHELL

In general, successful school and teacher improvement projects depend on:

i. **Understanding the local economic and cultural context adequately**

ii. **Diagnosing the nature of the problem accurately:**

- what are the patterns of performance? what do they reveal about under-achievement?
- what are the obstacles that are making the school/schools ineffective?
- what are the main barriers to learning that are getting in the way of pupils' achievements?
- how far can what is generally known about school and teacher effectiveness shed light on these factors?

iii. **Implementing appropriate strategies sensitively and efficiently.** 'Appropriate strategies' are those which *build capacity for managing change* at the municipal, community, institutional and classroom levels. This means creating confidence and ownership, as well as developing competence, amongst all the school's members and stakeholders. Parents and the community must be involved.

iv. **Encouraging teachers to work together** to develop instructional and pedagogical behaviors which are directive, flexible & motivating, which demonstrate the belief that all pupils can learn, and which promote higher order thinking skills in pupils

v. **Creating connections and synergy between different parts of the educational system**, and with other programs and agencies

vi. **Evaluating what is attempted and/or accomplished** in terms of its impact on student learning outcomes, not just at the end of a project but formatively throughout the process

vii. **Keeping the pupils' learning needs at the center of every initiative**

4. SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPROVEMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

4.1 The Context

> *'It is probably the case that in every developing country there are schools in which children complete primary education having mastered the skills targeted in the curriculum... While there are good public schools, which teach children successfully under difficult conditions, in most developing countries there are simply too few such schools. The result is that many students in developing countries do not acquire sufficient numeracy and literacy skills needed for functioning effectively in their own societies.'*
> (Lockheed, 1993)

Most studies of school effectiveness and improvement – including those discussed above – have been undertaken in developed countries, where the relative sophistication of material and economic infrastructure can be more or less taken for granted. To be useful beyond the countries where they are initiated, studies offering policy guidance need to be based on a sound understanding of how far prevailing conditions are the same or different elsewhere. For example, in some parts of rural Africa:

- there are few or no schools; buildings which do exist are poorly equipped
- teachers are not formally trained and there are few incentives to motivate them vocationally
- classes are either very large (> 100 pupils) or very small (< 10 pupils)
- children are not fluent in the language of instruction
- the local economy is pastorally-based and communities are nomadic: the economic needs for education are therefore not those of a modernized urban industrial society
- communities have a traditional (sometimes Islamic) history, where the accepted knowledge, values and skills are passed on orally through the family structure: the social and moral needs for education are therefore also not those of an urban society
- during their travels, nomadic families and their children may cross over state boundaries: systems introduced in one country may be quite different from – and more or less effective than – those in another country for such people.

Educational reform in such a context is almost bound – by equipping more and more young people with skills of literacy and numeracy, for example – to be a prime accelerator of transition to a more industrialized and urbanized economy. If handled well, i.e. with due sensitivity towards a community's needs and values, it may also ameliorate the transition process, and render its impact less sharp and dislocating for the

people affected. Reform initiatives, and research & development projects and their evaluations, therefore need to take these very specific local and cultural factors into account:

> *'Enthusiasm for educational reform has sometimes preceded the reality... Advocates act as if they can easily foretell the effects, positive or negative, of the actions they promote. This convenient fiction spawns reforms with myriad unintended consequences... Many well-intentioned initiatives have resulted in problems worse than the ones originally being addressed. Only through the careful examination of actual country experiences can the real benefits of many "reforms" be determined.'* (Chapman *et al.*, 1997)

4.2 The Research

4.2.1 The state of the art

There are some difficulties to be faced in discussing research in school effectiveness in developing countries. First, the model of school effectiveness generated from the large number of studies in developed countries is limited in its transferability to developing countries (taken from Scheerens, 1999):

- the model has the micro-level of individual schools as its focus, and thus ignores the important question of the extent to which the national system at a macro-level is functioning effectively
- the model has treated educational goals as largely given, in that it has tended to use pupils' scores on academic attainment tests as the chief outcome
- the application of the model has not given proper weight to issues of equity and efficiency, especially the longer-term societal effects of schooling – again, these issues need to be addressed at the macro-level of educational policy.

Secondly, empirical research on school effectiveness in developing countries is itself relatively limited or somewhat out-of-date (see Scheerens, 1999), and there are fewer robust and recent studies from which to draw conclusions. Scheerens identifies three factors which seem to be consistently important across all research studies:

- ✓ basic resource inputs, such as textbooks
- ✓ teacher quality, comprising teachers' education, knowledge, experience and proficiency
- ✓ instructional time and the demands made on students.

The first two factors seem to be more critical in developing than in developed countries. However, although this seems to make intuitive sense, it may also be due to the fact that (i) research in developing countries has so far tended to focus on inputs rather than school and classroom processes; (ii) there has been less variation between schools and classrooms in developing countries, prior to the introduction of decentralized systems.

The main messages for future research into effective schools and schooling in developing countries are that:

- the **macro-level** – i.e. national policy, resource allocation and implementation – needs to be evaluated alongside the micro-level
- program design for investigating and improving school effectiveness should be informed more explicitly by **broad societal objectives** for education
- in-school factors, particularly **school organization and leadership** and **instructional conditions/pedagogy**, will no doubt assume greater importance as systems become more decentralized and between-school variability increases
- some in-depth method for investigating **processes** – by direct classroom observation, for example – needs to be built into future studies; this could be done by linking **program evaluations** and **individual case studies** more closely with quantitative/ comparative studies.

4.2.2 The argument in favor of using a 'case study' approach

The last bullet point above deserves some further explanation. Whilst it may be true that problems in education are (sometimes) simple to analyse, the solutions are usually multi-faceted and complex. One of the frustrating but intractable aspects of the school effectiveness and improvement agenda is the fact that educational change and improvement take place in very specific contexts: so strategies which work in an urban setting with mixed ethnic/cultural groups, for example, may be irrelevant to a rural setting whose culture is homogenous. Furthermore, complex cognitive and affective interactions between human beings are integral to both the process and the 'product' of education. This combination of factors makes it very hard to produce generalizations about school effectiveness and improvement which are not also so highly abstracted that they are of limited use in assisting practical efforts 'on the ground'.

If the aim in school improvement writings is primarily to convey *'a world of meaning, purpose and institutional subtlety'* (in Michael Prowse's words) to which education developers can relate their own experience, then case studies are a powerful way of

achieving this. Case studies also offer the opportunity to disseminate knowledge and understanding, to share problems and challenges, and to inspire others to action.

The argument in favor of using a case study approach to gathering and evaluating information has been well made in an Oxfam publication (Roche, 1999, 150-1):

> *Case studies are particularly valuable where broad, complex questions have to be addressed in complex circumstances... This is particularly pertinent for development and policy work, given the many parallel and interrelated factors which affect people's lives...*
>
> *Case studies... are generally used when one needs to understand a specific group of people, a particular problem, or a unique situation in great depth; where one can identify cases rich in information – rich in the sense that a good deal can be learned from a few examples – and where the complexity of the issues makes standardised approaches less suitable...*

Case studies are 'evaluative narratives' which can – without claiming to represent the only evidence available – provide a body of fresh insights which contributes to:

- the flow of knowledge and information between and within education systems about what constitutes 'good practice';
- the increasing systematization of 'craft' or 'intuitive professional' knowledge;
- accumulation of evidence of impact on learning outcomes for young people and on capacity-building at institutional level;
- the evaluation and dissemination of success factors integral to particular initiatives;
- an understanding of 'unintended consequences' and how these intervene on planned actions and activities;
- an understanding of the potential for (and limits of) sustainability and transferability of particular models of school improvement;
- 'values orientation', i.e. some ways of answering the question *'is what we are doing "right" as well as "effective"?'*;
- the development of approaches to school self-management and self-review.

A series of case studies from countries around the world is to be found in the delegates' packs for the Workshop.

4.3 The Future: Improving School Effectiveness in Developing Countries

Improving schools in developing countries is a continuing concern for the World Bank, which is now the largest single source of external financing in developing countries (World Bank, 1995). Bank programs encourage governments to give a higher priority to education and educational reform, and the spread of education has helped to reduce poverty.

But major challenges remain. The problems in providing high-quality education noted by Lockheed and Levin (1993) are probably still as pressing for many countries in 2000 as they were eight or ten years ago:

> *'Schools in developing societies face problems of relatively low school participation in terms of enrollments of eligible age groups; low levels of school completion, even at primary level; and low levels of achievement... their lack of effectiveness is not a mystery, for resources sufficient to provide even the most rudimentary conditions for success are often lacking.'*

Even so, the challenges may be as much concerned with designing and implementing the appropriate kinds of project to address the problems of education and schooling in developing countries as with the problems themselves:

> *'It is striking that none of the twenty-six project designs studied had clear operational definitions of what was being sought for the students' learning environment, and none included definitions of the knowledge and skills expected of a child when he or she leaves primary school.'*
> (Heneveld and Craig, 1996)

Another World Bank study (World Bank Operations Evaluation Department, 1999) argued that:

> *'Good practice in project design involves the following elements:*
>
> *i. activities must match the implementation capacity of institutions*
> *ii. components must match the coordination capacity of project management*
> *iii. activities must be properly sequenced*

iv. *the policy and institutional frameworks must be strong enough to withstand the strains of project activities.'*

Additional recommendations made in that study include:

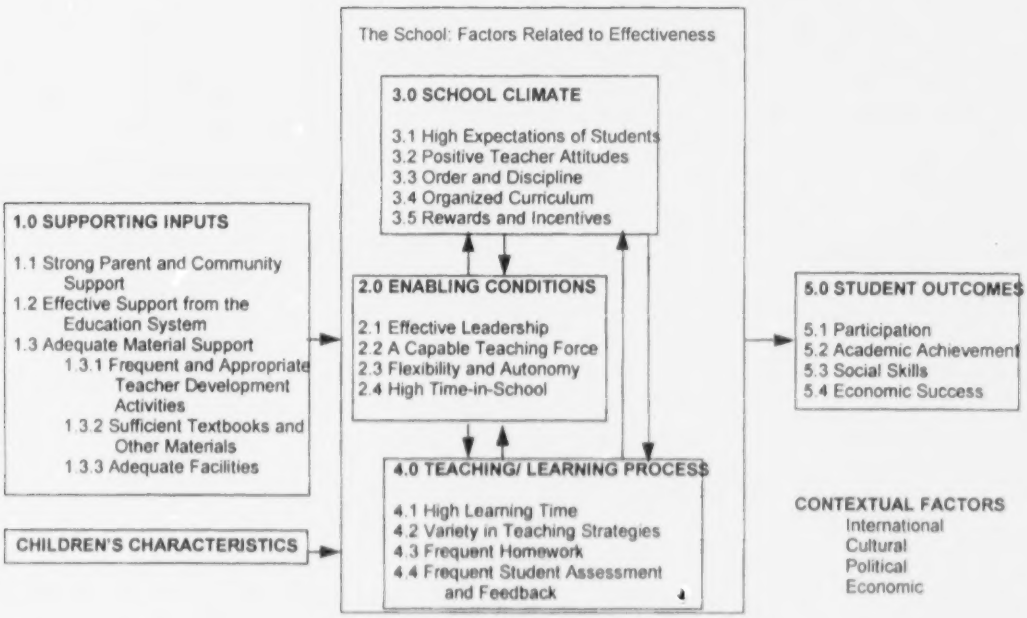
- incorporating the concerns of stakeholders into project design
- defining and phasing in strategic reform measures over time
- developing a widespread public consensus for education reforms before they are undertaken
- building central management and administrative capacity (e.g. through civil service reforms) in order to strengthen the chances of sustaining improvements
- incorporating new approaches to increasing the involvement of communities in school management and resourcing
- including relevant, monitorable output and outcome indicators.

Recommendations for ways in which governments and donor organizations can together improve educational reform programs were also made by Heneveld and Craig (1996); these can be summarized as follows:

- the econometric input-output model of schooling is not adequate to understanding and planning improvements in what goes on in schools and classrooms: a **more process-oriented approach**, based on the conception of schools as social systems, is required
- Governments should operationally define the **expected outcomes for students** and the **priority conditions in schools** that need to be strengthened before a reform program is designed; these need to included in all planning documents
- Governments should establish a system for **monitoring implementation and the impact of changes**, using indicators derived from the expected outcomes and priority conditions above
- donors should allow for more **flexibility in the timetables** for developing a loan or grant
- donors should make **frequent visits to the field**, identifying planning problems and providing advice
- Government and donors should **improve staff knowledge and skills** with respect to in-school factors. This will require spending more time in schools looking at and listening to what is going on.

So far as sub-Saharan Africa in particular is concerned, the factors identified by Heneveld and Craig in the mid-1990s as of greatest relevance in determining school effectiveness are likely still to be the primary ones. These were compiled from both school effectiveness *and* school improvement research findings in developing countries, and are given in the diagram below. Their text gives a detailed definition of each factor, supported by references. (The most important sources were Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991; Dalin *et al.*, 1992; Levin and Lockheed, 1993.)

Figure 2: Conceptual framework: factors affecting school effectiveness



Each of these aspects needs its own detailed investigation, of course, together with examples of 'what works'.

It may be useful to end this paper with a quotation from Lockheed and Levin (1993), to remind ourselves that knowing what the salient characteristics are is not a guarantee that the requirements will be met:

> *'A major determinant of whether schools will adopt these requirements is the will or commitment by governments and communities to create effective schools. The notion of will or commitment is a complicated one. It goes beyond wishes or desires to leadership and even sacrifice. That is, for governments, communities and households to provide adequate resources requires that they sacrifice other amenities for which those resources can be used. It requires that resources move from public bureaucracies into classrooms. It means that parents must reinforce school goals in the home and community and must set high expectations for their own children. It means that school personnel must view all children as being educable and must work together to make that vision a reality. Finally, it means that schools have a vision of the future for all of their children that they will not swerve from in spite of the obstacles.'*

The case studies which are to be found in the delegates' packs for the Workshop give many insights into approaches – and the visions of effective schools, the commitment of people and the resources made available, on which these approaches are based – that have been used to address a range of complex and specific problems in different countries and localities. The Workshop itself, and the information and insights delegates bring from their own experiences, will contribute further to the body of knowledge and understanding of how to provide young people with the best possible learning environments.

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APPENDIX: WEBSITE INFORMATION

The Bank is in the process of developing a series of websites to support educational development; of particular interest may be:

- **Access and Equity in Education**
- **Education Reform and Management**
- **Effective Schools and Teachers** (see below)
- **School Health**

Draft framework for **The Effective Schools and Teachers Website**

The team has selected and organized material into five different levels of knowledge-sharing for the Website, as follows:

- **Front pages**, distilling current thinking in each of the eight domains and sub-domains
- **Topic** articles, consisting of concise papers by experts, to present and discuss selected topics of common interest within each of the eight domains
- **Case studies**, based on evaluations from the field, to exemplify different elements and issues – grounded in a range of specific contexts – in the drive for improvement
- **Checklists**, drawn up by expert practitioners or researchers, to summarize key points to bear in mind when considering particular approaches and options
- **Tools**, collected from a range of sources, to provide practical guidance on how to carry out specific tasks or activities

Additionally, there will be four catalogues of Resources:

- **References and Bibliographic Resources**
- **EST Training Courses and Workshops**
- **EST Training Packs and Presentations**
- **EST Directory of Experts**